PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN IN THE NOVELS AND SHORT-STORIES OF BHARATI MUKHERJI

The novels of Bharati Mukherjee are self actualising. Quest for the definition of self and search for identity are the main features of her women who are seen caught in the flux of tradition and tradition and modernity. Neither can they completely detach themselves from their part, nor do they have any certitude in the future. Bharati Mukherjee has interceded reworked the study of feminism in her writings. Central to her vision in The Holder Of The World, Wife and jasmine are issues related to women. Feminism in her works has something of What Caroll Smith Rosen Berg (1979) argues is "the emotional segregation of women and man, which brought about, led to the development of a specifically female world(137)". The network of female world comes to us not only in Mukherjee's novels but also in her collections of Short Stories. She advocates many faces of feminism encompassing agitation for equal opportunity, sexual autonomy and right of self determination.

Justification Mukherjee's fiction convinces us that gender is a multifaceted category open to change and variation, and reinforces, what Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing had suggested-that particular forms of female marginality must be examined in relation to the conditions of women's lives-as immigrants, minorities, wealthy, poor, black, white, sex workers, maids, or academics (quoted by Rayaprol 135). Mukherjee's depiction of women and their different relationships portrays the dominance of patriarchal practices in traditional society, as well as the forms of liberation and empowerment which are available to women in their diasporic situation. Mukherjee's female characters are real, modern lifelike. They are typical representatives of young women particularly of The Third World countries who cherish the dream of emigrating to America for higher education and higher wages, and then after arrival there, aspire to settle there permanently. Their situations and the difficulties they face are also realistically portrayed. In nearly all stories there is a fixed pattern. In the first part of each story, the focus is on narrating the situation of an immigrant who is in the process of immigration or settling down and in the second part who is in the process of immigration or settling down and in the second part the protagonist is invariably given to making love with a partner of the opposite sex who is rooted in the Americansoil.

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Bharati Mukherjee is a significant woman novelist. She was born on 27th July 1940, in a Bengali Brahmin family of Calcutta. Her father’s name was Sudhir Lal Mukherjee. He was a pharmaceutical chemist. Her mother, Bina Mukherjee was a housewife.

Mukherjee spent her first eight years as a member with her parents and two sisters in a joint family. She lived with her parents and two sisters in London for about three years. In 1951 the family returned to Calcutta and she joined the English-speaking Loreto, convent school, run by Irish nuns. Mukherjee and her sisters were chauffeured to the convent school quite, Characteristic of this clash of Bengalis, the family "westernized" in the sense that English education was valued. In 1958, Mukherjee’s father lost her partnership in the factory and moved him family to Baroda. Bharati Mukherjee completed her B.A. (Honours) English at university of Calcutta in 1959. She took her M.A. degree in English from the university of Baroda in 1961. She went to the University of obtained an MFA in creative writing in 1963 and a Ph.D. in English in 1969. In the University of Iowa Mukherjee met Clark Blaise, a Canadians fellow student at the university of Iowa. She married him in 1963. She lived in Canada from 1966 to 1980. She got Canadian citizenship and lived in...
Toronto and then in Montreal. She held teaching portions at MC Gill university and Concordia university. She migrated to the U.S.A. in 1980 with her family and become a U.S.A citizen in 1988.

She was awarded the "Prestigious Shastri Indo Canadian Institute Grant" during the year 1976-77. She was a recipient of "Guggenhein Foundation Award" in 1978-79 and "Canadian Government Award in 1982." She also won the first prize from "Periodical Distribution Association in 1980" for her short story "Isolated Incidents". Mukherjee has also been honoured with the "National Book Critics Circle Award" for her short stories collection. "The Middleman and Other Stories in 1989". Her other works are. Her creative five novels are: "The Tiger's Daughter (1972), Wife (1975), Jasmine (1989), The Holder of the world (1993), Leave It to me (1997), Desirable Daughters (2002) and The tree Bride (2004) and two collections of short stories : "Darkness (1985)" and " The Middleman and Other Stories (1988)".

Her husband, Clark Blaise, helps her in her fiction. He is an American - Canadian author. He teaches also in the English department of Columbia university. She has co-authored with her husband two non-fictional works: first is "Days and Night in Calcutta" in (1977), and second is "The Sorrow and the Terror"

Chapter-II Portrayal Of Women In "The Tiger's Daughter"

The Tiger's Daughter reflects the confrontation between illusion and reality. Tara, the protagonist was packed off by her father at early age of fifteen at America, because he was prompted by suspicion and pain for his country. Tara is homesick in Poughkeepsie. Little things pained her. She sensed discriminaton if her room mate did not share her mango chutney. She defended her family and her country vehemently. She prayed to kali for strength, so that she would not break down, before the Americans.

It was fate that she fell in love with an American. This novel begins with a reference to fate and astrology. It seems a device adopted by the writer around which she can weave her plots. Tara's husband David was painfully Western, she was dutifully devious in her marriage. She could not communicate the finer nuances of her family background and life in Calcutta. Her husband asked naive questions about Indian Customs and Traditions. She felt completely insecure in an alien atmosphere.

"Madisson Square was unbearable and her husband was after all a foreigner." After a gap of seven years Tara planned a trip to India, for years she had dreamed of this return. She believed that all hesitations and all shadowy fears of the time abroad would be erased quite magically if she could return home to Calcutta. With the precision of a newspaper reporter, Bharati Mukherjee leads her heroine through a series of adventures and dis-adventures to a final self-realisation and reconciliation. Tara's homesick eyes noticed may changes in the city of Calcutta. She was outraged, and could not respond to these changes. She longed for the Bengal Of Satyajit Rao, children running through cool green spaces, aristocrats despairing in music rooms of empty places. What confronted her was a restive city which forced weak men to fanatical defiance or dishonesty.

The writer interlinks the events-like Tara's visit to funeral pyre at the river bank, her meeting with a small beggar girl affected with leprosy, the vision of beggar children eating off the street, the superficialities in the lives of her friends, the riots and demonstrations and her claustrophobic rape by the politician Tuntunwala to bring out the trauma of Tara's visit to India. Tara's visit to Darjelling is also marred by ugly and violent incidents.

Many of Tara's doubts and conflicts are resolved by the strength, determination and quite dignity of her parents. Antonia Whitehead, an American lends Tara a fresher and clearer perspective about her country. Tara realized that her earlier responses to Calcutta had also been similarly impatient, menacing and equally innocent. The visit to the ashram of Mata Kananbala Devi makes her share of love for her mother as well as the worshippers. The Indian dream is shattered but the writer leads the heroine to a final reconciliation.

At the end of the novel, Tara is involved in a violent demonstration, in which Joyob Roy
Chaudhary, a symbol of the old world is brutally beaten to death. Pronob the youth tries to save him, but is himself injured in the process. This was a course of history, which could not be stopped. She felt she had made peace with the city, nothing more was demanded.

Chapter-III Portrayal Of Women In Wife

Wife is a story of Dimple Das Gupta, a product of Calcutta’s middle class that values docility and submissiveness in women. From the very beginning we feel that the Dimple is not like a normal girl, she thinks that marriage is a blessing in disguise. It will bring her freedom, fortune and happiness. At last her father Mr. DasGupta married her daughter with Amit Basu. Basu’s house is not attractive, so she does not feel easy there. She doesn’t likes Amit’s mother and sister also. Her mother-in-law dislikes her name and wants to call her Nandini. Dimple Basu has always lived in a fantastic world, a world which is created by herself. But when she confronts the hard realities of life the feathers of her imagination are clipped. Amit was not the man Dimple has imagined for her husband.

With the passing of time the excitement of marriage diminishes and she becomes pregnant. She feels a strange sensation. Pregnancy is a boon for Indian women, but Dimple is singular in that she thought of ways to get rid of. So she decides to terminate her pregnancy. Only Dimple who can do herself abortion, She never repents her cruel deeds. Inamdar rightly says Dimple is a psychic study of an abnormal woman.

Dimple wants to do away with the tradition taboos of a wife and she becomes on escapist, lost in her requestered world of fantasy. The killing of a mouse to her is a symbolic suicide of herself. In New York her circumscribed self finds expressions for her frustration in a chilling effect of self assertion- the act being the cold blooded murder of her husband. The name Dimple is quite scintillating and enticing but lexico-graphically it means any slight surface depression. This depression on the surface is again symbolic of the depression within her psyche, which is borne out of her irritable responses to the things around her.

Bharati Mukherjee present the world of Dimple. A world of day dreams and nightmares and her morbid psyche through a series of grotesque images. Dimple’s morbidity is evident while she is still at her parental home in the way she allows her conscious mind to be completely dominated by the colourful romance projected in the advertisements and the stories of magazines. Including herself in sexual fantasies with Cricket Stars, Young Cabinet Ministers and Heroes from novels, Dimple sets out on a long journey of unreal meaningless and morbid existence.

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Chapter-IV Portrayal Of Women In Jasmine: Jasmine can be read as a feminist novel where the protagonist rebels not only against age-old superstitions and traditions, but also effects a proper balance between tradition and modernity. The novel is a celebration of the strength of a woman, not her weakness. In a language of emotion and meticulous metaphor using images provided by the woman protagonist the novelist has articulated the many sided pathos and rebellion of contemporary Indian Woman, not only in India but also in New World.

In Jasmine a woman comes to terms with her own self. As Sumita Roy points out:從Jasmine’s search for self-recognition takes her in social and spiritual direction, till she arrives at a time when she can view the future greedy with wants and reckless from hope.

From the very beginning Bharati Mukherjee has delineated the Jyoti of Hasanpur (who later on becomes Jasmine, and Jase and Jane) as a rebel against blind beliefs and superstitions. Early in the novel Jyoti tries to
raise herself above such blind belief in fate which is adumbrated by the astrologer thus "fate is
Fate". While scavenging firewood Jyoti gets a star shaped wound on her forehead. That scar becomes
her third eye and through an archetypal image (Shiva's Third Eye) Mukherjee shows that already Jyoti
was peering out into invisible words (Now I am a sage)

The third eye gives her a wide and true perspective on life. She learns to look back to the
past not like a coward bunkering herself inside nostalgia, sheathing her heart in a bullet-proof vest. For her,
even memories are a sign of disloyalty. Similarly with her third eye she learns to look into the future with
pain and hope and when she embarks into her final journey in America she is "greedy" with
wants and reckless with hopes. It is as if like Shiva she was swallowed the cosmos whole.

Bharati Mukherjee also shows her woman protagonist repudiating centuries old ugly Indian tradition of checking the boys horoscope. The second archetypal image that Bharati Mukherjee uses to bring out the protagonist's feminist trait is that of Kali, the Goddess of Destruction. But since in Hindu mythology Kali is an incarnation of Durga, the Goddess of Strength (shakti), the image here is more relevant to the strength of a woman like Jasmine who has embarked on a perilous journey to a new world of fulfill her husband's dream. After her husband's death in order to reach USA she stows in a boat captained by half-face. But after landing in America when half-face demands his price (nothing less than the satisfaction of his lurtful passions will do) Jasmine in a truly feminist gesture decides to kill the Devil Incarnate and Bharati Mukherjee brilliantly fuses two archetypal image to enact the killing of Kali : The Goddess of Destruction and strength and the broken pitcher.

This new identity in reality expresses another aspect of the feminist in the Indian fiction in English for the true feminist, in my eyes, is the one who has achieved a proper balance between tradition and modernity. In the beginning in America Jasmine lodges with Prakash's Professorji-Mr. Vadhera. But she feel uncomfortable in Professorji's house which they have converted into a Punjab ghetto. She wants to get away from the claustrophobic traditional and Indianness and her chồng's dream. and Bharati Mukherjee brings out this contrast between tradition and modernity through the contrast between Professorji wife Nirmala and the protagonist Jasmine. Nirmala only takes, Jasmine both takes and gives. That is why she can escape the Indian ghetto in flushing and adopt herself to the patterns of dominant. American culture (modernity) but that does not mean she throws to the wind her race, her religion, her beliefs (tradition). A true feminist Jasmine, does not hold fast to nostalgia that is dead but maintains certain basic traits of Indian Culture even after imbibing American Culture. Thus even after Jasmine has become Dulfs's day Mummy, a caregiver (not a servant, mind you) in the Taylor household her traditional roots break through again and again.

With infinite care Bharati Mukherjee her protagonist's gradual transformation but sometimes there is a conflict between Jasmine's two selves, one still holding fast to traditional Indian Values of life and the other an adventure in a Capitalistic Culture. But as an apotheosis of true Feminist spirit Jasmine does not hold fast to a dead nostalgia and as she tells Taylor about her past, it gets exercised. She falls hopelessly in love with Taylor but the past comes back to destroy her present when she sees Sukhi, her husband's murderer in the park and she decides to leave Claremont For Iowa. And here in Iowa Budd Ripplemeyer falls in love with her (and she gets a new identity : Jane Ripplemeyer). Budd courts her because for him she is the very embodiment of Eastern mystery. "Budd courts me because I am alien, I am darkness, mystery inscrutability."

Bharati Mukherjee passes the final judgement through her mouthpiece, Jasmine, we are once won over by her scintillating prose, her cadenced rhythm and above all her powerful feminist convictions. "I am caught between the promise of America and old world dutifulness." Chapter-V Portrayal Of Women In The Holder Of The World

"The Holder Of The World" is a feminist novel. But as far as handling of feminist point of debate is concerned a parallel can be drawn between The Journey Of Ithaca and...
"The Holder Of The World" is a story of Hannah Easton, an abandoned child who came to India in the seventeenth century and imbued herself in its culture.

Hannah Easton arrives in India from Puritan Massachusetts and translates herself into the Salem Bibi, the mistress of Raja Jadav Singh. The novel also gyrates around the tale of the Emperor's Tear, the diamond which Aurangzeb hung in his war tent and which Hannah steals. But history loses the diamond. In the mid-twentieth century Beigh Masters and her boyfriend Venn Iyer of MIT strives to create the greatest data plasma in the world. They steer to unearth something useful from layers of history, life and times of the Salem Bibi and the Emperor's Tear. Beigh Masters visit the Maritime Museum in Massachusetts to lock into the dusty debris of Mughal Miniature Paintings; goes to auction houses and several historical records and memories. The transmigration of Salem Bibi's soul through time and space becomes an allegory of Beifg Master's personal discovery. Flavour of historical feminism is insinuated here and there through the incidents of Hannah's life. Her mother Rebecca leaves an ineradicable imprint on young Hannah's mind which she disappears with a Nipmuc - The ultimate unnatural crime of Puritan Life……. She (Hannah) witnessed the fall, not Adam's fall Rebecca's fall. Hannah carries claustrophobic memories of the event through out her life. She too later profligates the concept of a proper English lady to become the bibi of Jadav Singh, who is fighting the Mughals. She was brought up in an orthodox setup of fitch household, gained all the conventional wisdom and housekeeping, developed an obsessive love of needle work.

Hannah neither forgets nor forgives her mother's crime of elopement. She never shares her emotional tumult with anyone. In the Puritan family circle of fitch she could never imagine to talk to her mother. Her husband Gabriel Legge is a colourful raconteur, the swaggering seafarer, he never had time or sensibility to listen to Hannah. He is employed as a factor of the East India Company. Hannah's fate brings her to India, her marriage with Gabriel emulates her mother's behaviour. She finds a good friend in Bhagmati, her Indian ayah, who brings to her the glimmerings of understanding of an aged civilization. She narrates fragments from The Ramayana. She is attracted to the events of Sita's life because she proves her purity to her husband and to her society in a trial by fire. The God Of Fire, Agni, embraces her and expels her unscorched. An interesting parallel is that Hannah's life was also a trial by fire, but unlike Sita she never withstands Agnipariksha for the sake of her husband.

Gabriel wanted Hannah to triumph over her Puritan sensibilities and she obliged him, because she loved things of life. Legge joins a group of pirates and during one of his misadventures with Haj pilgrims he is separated from his wife. Hanna escapes with Bhagmati to Panpur under the protection of Raja Jadav Singh of Devvgad. Bhagmati and Hannah become the guests of Raja. She steps into a new world of Hinduism. She and Jadav Singh wooed each other. The Nawab Haider Beg despatches his most ruthless commander, Morad farah, to cage Raja, Jadav Singh unseal the diamond, Emperor's Tear and bring Hannah, the fireangi lady. Jadav Singh with no option, bundled Hannah and Bhagmati into a palanquin and a disguised Raja into another. On their way to Nawab the Raja attacked the Mughal army. Hannah eventually kills Morad saves Jadav's life and brings him back to Panpur. She decides to offer her life to end the war, goes to transact with the Emperor but is taken hostage by him. Whenever, Aurangzeb comes to see her, she is reminded of Ravana the demon king of Lanka in Muslim disguise. Though she fails in her mission for armistice between the Raja and the Emperor, somehow, she purloins the diamond - the Emperor's Tear. She hands over the diamond to Bhagmati. The diamond is ultimately found by Beigh Masters in a cyberspatial finale. Bhagmati thrusts the world's most famous diamond into her dying womb. It is in her grave that they find the holder of the world of the seventeenth century.

Bharati Mukherjee sees herself as a unique human being and gives message to her fellow female. In The Holder Of The World, she suggests two advantages of Women Liberation. Hannah and Bhagmati in The Holder Of The World recurrently defy estrangement in the society they live and get the answer in rejecting cultural stereotypes they develop the life of their own outside the home. The Salem Bibi provokes Masters Beigh to unreveal the mystery which surrounded her life and the diamond. Mukherjee devotes her attention to female issues in the historical times as well as in the contemporary society. Mukherjee and Master Beigh involve deeply in the Salem Bibi in making sense from the historical evidences.
because conventional answers no longer satisfy. They feel social and cultural change in a recursive process and women have to play steering role.

Chapter VI Portrayal Of Women In “Leave It To Me”: The protagonist is a Eurasian Orphan, Debbie Devi who is adopted by an upstate New York family of Italian Origin. Born in India and raised as an adopted child, Devi Dee travels through America to find her bio-mom. By the time she has arrived in San Francisco and taken a band of aging hippies and a psychotic Vietnam Vet, her identity crisis looms large. It leads her to track down her bio-parents in Laxmipur, Devigaon, India, and the orphanage where she raised—the Gray Sisters—and Sore Grease-in Mount Abu. She learns from Fred, her hired detective, that her mother was the Hippie follower of a sex-age guru, and her father the founder of the ashram, serial killer Romeo Hawk Haque. The offspring of this unlikely liaison, Devi Dee—presumed missing or dead is saved by nuns and shipped abroad to America, where she is raised as the adopted child of the Di Martino family. Twenty years later having graduated from Sunny, Albany, she sets out to seek her bio-mom in off-beat California. This novel makes the predicament of the protagonist crystal-clear, Mukherjee deals with the reality of “Time-Travel”. In “Leave It To Me”: Mukherjee reverts to her earlier obsession with an exile’s agony.

Chapter VII Portrayal Of Women In “Desirable Daughters”: “Desirable Daughters” follow the diverging paths taken by three Calcutta-born sisters as they come of age in a changing world. Tara, Padma and Parvati were born into a wealthy Brahmin family presided over by their dothing father and their traditionalist mother. Intelligent and artistic, the girls are nevertheless constrained by a society with little regard for women. Their subsequent rebellion will lead them in different directions to different continents and through different circumstances that strain yet ultimately strengthen their relationship.

Bharati Mukherjee has written a remarkable novel that is both the portrait of a traditional Indian Brahmin family and a contemporary American story of a woman who is in many ways broken with tradition but still remains tied to her native country. This is about three Bengali sisters who grew up in Calcutta and eventually end up in three different corners of the globe leading three different lifestyles. One lives a comfortable life in a posh residential locality in Mumbai keeping herself busy in household chores. Another of the sister ends up New Jersey among the elite class of migrant Indians. The third ends up in the West in California Leading a more pedestrian life after getting a divorce from her business tycoon husband. It is an interesting tale about how life puts us in different circumstances we hardly imagined ourselves in and how each of us overcomes the challenges that life poses us.

“Desirable Daughters” is a melting pot of styles. It is a middlebrow women’s novel (think an Indian Hannah and her sisters); a postcolonial tale life with meditations on belonging and exile, and a thriller, complete with a mysterious stranger and quirky cop. Throw in a touch of Hindu style magic realism and stir.

Tara Chatterjee, the aforementioned narrator, is the youngest of three sisters from the wealthy Calcutta family trapped between the old world and the new. At nineteen she was married off to Bish Chatterjee, who became a Silicon Valley Billionaire. Now pushing 40, Tara is a divorcée living in San Francisco with her teenage son and her boyfriend, a Buddhist earthquake-proofer whose truck advertises him as the Zen Master of Retro Fit.

Although she left Calcutta decades ago, Tara radar is always on alert, encoding names, manners, and accents whenever she encounters strangers of Indian descent. This ethnic antenna comes in handy when young man named Chris Dey surfaces, claiming to be the illegitimate son of her eldest sister, Padma. Tara senses there is something fishy about him and call her riblings, hoping to clear up the mystery. These searching conversations with Padma (a multicultural performance artist in New Jersey) and Parvati (who lives in Bombay and, worries incessantly about crime) provide some of the funniest, most astute scenes in the novel. Mukherjee has perfect emotional pitch, nailing the conflicted, sometimes vicious dynamics among sisters. Tara initially describes her family as close; in reality, she and her sisters routinely whitewash their sadness. The rules of our transcontinental relationships are instituted, never acknowledged. Tara admits at one point, We accept that given the international phone rates, our personal defeats are too banal to waste money on. When she tries to pump them for information on the mysterious Chris Day, they scold her for tainting their cloistered, halcyon childhood with scandal. After some sleuthing on
Tara's part, she discovers that her father, a religious Brahmin, forbade Padma from marrying her Christian boyfriend, Ronald Dey, she also learns that the man who claims to be Chris Dey may be an importer linked to an Indian gangster syndicate who is